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XIX.—*On a small Collection of Birds from Henderson Island, South Pacific.* By W. R. OGILVIE-GRANT.

(Plate IX.)

A SHORT account of the birds collected on Henderson Island and presented to the British Museum by Messrs. D. R. Tait and J. R. Jamieson, was published in the 'Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club,' xxxi. pp. 58-61 (1913).

Under the direction of Sir John Murray an expedition in search of lime-deposits visited Henderson Island in 1912, and though unsuccessful in their principal object, the members met with several interesting birds, of which four are peculiar to the island.

When describing these birds I unfortunately overlooked the fact that a short paper on the avifauna of that island had already been published by Mr. A. J. North in the 'Records of the Australian Museum,' vii. pp. 29-31 (1908). Mr. A. E. Stephen visited the island in 1907 and collected six birds, which were preserved in spirits and forwarded to the Australian Museum; these included two, out of the three species which I described as new. The cause of this oversight has already been explained in the 'Bulletin' (*t. c.* pp. 76-77), and I have to thank Dr. Charles W. Richmond, of the United States National Museum, Washington, for calling my attention to Mr. North's paper.

Henderson or Elizabeth Island, one of the most southern and easterly islands of the Southern Pacific, lies about 120 miles to the north-east of Pitcairn, at about  $128^{\circ}$  W. Long. and  $22^{\circ}$  S. Lat.

The account given by the members of the expedition which recently visited it differs somewhat from that published by the Rev. T. B. Murray and quoted in my paper in the 'Bulletin.' No trace of volcanic rock was found, and the island is said to be an upraised atoll, rising about eighty feet above the sea. Phosphate rocks are found, but not in sufficient quantity to pay the cost of working. There is a slight depression on the top apparently representing the lagoon of the atoll, which seems to have been upraised in comparatively recent geological times.

The general account of Henderson Island by Mr. Stephen published by Mr. A. J. North, is so much better than any other that I have taken the liberty of quoting it:—

"Henderson Island is an elevated coral islet about six miles long and three miles broad, rising fifty feet above sea-level. The tableland is flat and roughly strewn with dead coral-fragments and pointed or knife-edged weathered compact coralline limestone. The vegetation is dense scrub, with vines and ferns. *Pandanus* trees were about the highest on the island, some being quite thirty feet high. The soil is very scanty, and the vegetation is often thickest in slight depression-areas, where soil is more abundant. No water or swampy places were found, drinking-water having to be taken on the various excursions. The island is uninhabited, and has rarely been visited by vessels, but the Pitcairn islanders occasionally visit it for fishing purposes, since fish are very plentiful there. There are two cocoanut trees on the beach on the north end of the island, planted many years ago by some of the Pitcairn islanders.

". . . . Animal life noticed during the short stay was as follows:—One variety of rat, very similar to the Pacific type; one skink (very plentiful); one small butterfly; one paroquet (not very plentiful—only seen on the high part of the island, and generally in pairs); one black crane (fairly

plentiful in the interior of the island, which probably lives on tiny land-molluses, which abound in the scanty soil over the high land); one dove, pink-crested, found more or less in flocks of about twenty or more. 'Mutton birds' (*Puffinus* sp.?) were very plentiful, and laid their eggs on the ground among the scrub in more or less secluded places all over the island; white terns were also plentiful; noddies were not so plentiful; frigate-birds were numerous; one species of small brown bird with white tail-feathers, similar to one at Pitcairn."

The last-named species was evidently the Sedge-Warbler described below.

#### ACROCEPHALUS TAITI.

*Acrocephalus taiti* Ogilvie-Grant, Bull. B. O. C. xxxi. p. 58 (1913).

*Adult male and female.* General colour above earth-brown, the greater wing-coverts with pale edges and the four outer tail-feathers tipped with white in decreasing proportions from the third outwards to the sixth pair; lores, eyebrow-stripes, and underparts white tinged with buff; thighs dusky; under wing-coverts and bend of the wing washed with pale fawn-colour. Iris brown in the male, red in the female; bill grey; feet slate-grey.

*Adult male.* Total length about 180 mm.; culmen from feathers on forehead 16.5; wing 84; tail 77; tarsus 32.

*Adult female.* Total length about 177 mm.; culmen from feathers on forehead 15.5; wing 79; tail 74; tarsus 29.

Another male has a large portion of the plumage showing that curious tendency to albinism which is so often to be found in the allied *A. vaughani* Sharpe, from Pitcairn Island. This individual has the head mostly white, with the exception of a few dark feathers on the forehead and occiput; the feathers of the upperparts and wing-coverts are a mixture of brown and white, many of the brown feathers being tipped with whitish, producing a mottled appearance; primary-quills mostly dark brown, one or two of the middle and inner ones being tipped with white;

secondary quills largely white on the left wing, less so on the right; tail mostly white, some of the middle feathers only being partially brown; underparts, including the sides of the head, chin, and throat, white. Iris brown; bill grey; feet slate-grey.

Types in the British Museum: ♂ ♀. Nos. 9 & 9A. Henderson Island, S. Pacific, 27-29. x. 12. D. R. Tait coll.

This species differs from *A. vaughani* in having the feathers of the head uniform brown, not edged with yellowish-white, which gives the crown of that species a somewhat scaled appearance.

The amount of white in the plumage of Acrocephaline birds from the Pitcairn and other Pacific Islands appears to vary greatly in different individuals, and is generally unevenly developed on the two sides of the body. It would seem as though this tendency to albinism might be due to degeneration caused by inbreeding.

By many ornithologists the Reed-Warblers of the Pacific Islands are placed in a distinct genus *Tatare*, but there does not seem to be any good reason for separating them from their Western allies.

*VINI STEPHENI* (North). (Plate IX.)

*Calliptilus* (?) *stepheni* North, Records Austr. Mus. vii. p. 29 (1908).

*Vini hendersoni* Ogilvie-Grant, Bull. B. O. C. xxxi. p. 60 (1913).

*Adult male and female.* Appear to be most nearly allied to *Vini kuhli* (Vigors) from the Fanning Islands, but differ in many important particulars. The feathers of the occiput are dark green with brighter green shaft-streaks, like those of the crown, instead of deep purple; the tail-feathers have the terminal portion yellow tinged with greenish, and the basal portion mottled with dark green on the outer web and with scarlet and black, or scarlet, on the inner web, while in *V. kuhli* they are very differently coloured. The green of the neck extends on to the sides of the chest, and there



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is an indistinct dark purple band across the upper breast, which is wanting in the bird from the Fanning Islands. The tail is rather more wedge-shaped than in *V. kuhli*, the middle pair of tail-feathers being proportionately somewhat longer. Iris yellow; bill dark yellow; feet and legs yellowish-brown. Total length about 200 mm.; wing 125; tail 90.

The genus *Vini* has been characterized by Salvadori (cf. Cat. Birds B. M. xx. p. 11, and Wytsman's 'Genera Avium,' Psittaci, family Loriidæ, p. 2) as having the first three or four primaries notched at the tip; but this character is only found in a marked degree in *V. australis*, from Samoa and the Friendly Islands, while in *V. kuhli*, the type of the genus, it is much less apparent, as is also the case in the present species from Henderson Island. This character appears to be of specific rather than of generic value.

It seems pretty certain that the true home of *V. kuhli* is the Society Group in the Islands of Tahiti, Bora-Bora, &c., where it is probably now extinct, and that it must have been imported subsequently to the Fanning Group. The occurrence of the present species in Henderson Island strengthens this view, and the geographical range of the genus *Vini* would thus extend from Samoa and the Friendly Islands, where *V. australis* occurs, to Henderson Island. The Fanning Islands lie far to the north and are distant from Samoa about 1500 miles, and from Henderson Island about 3000 miles.

#### PORZANA ATRA North.

*Porzana atra* North, Records Austr. Mus. vii. p. 31 (1908).

*Porzana murrayi* Ogilvie-Grant, Bull. B. O. C. xxxi. p. 61 (1913).

*Adult.* Perhaps most nearly allied to the widely distributed *P. tabuensis* (Gmel.), but the entire plumage is deep black, with a slight greyish gloss. Iris red; bill black; feet orange. Total length about 180 mm.;

culmen 22; wing 80: tail 39; tarsus 36: middle toe and claw 41.

This species is obviously non-migratory, as is evidenced by its comparatively short feeble wings, which are much shorter than in *P. tabuensis*. In general appearance the species recalls *Limnecorax niger* (Gmel.), which is widely distributed over Africa, but the latter is of a rather greyer black and has the bill dull green.

*The young in first plumage* is rather greyer on the throat and underparts than the adult, and has the legs black. Wing 76 mm.

*The nestling* is covered with deep velvety-black down.

The occurrence of this Rail in an island devoid of permanent water is of interest. It inhabits the thick scrub and is said to be very tame.

#### PTILOPUS INSULARIS North.

*Ptilopus insularis* North, Records Austr. Mus. vii. p. 30 (1908).

*Ptilopus coralensis* Ogilvie-Grant (nec Peale), Bull B.O.C. xxxi. p. 61 (1913).

Mr. North has described the Fruit-Pigeon from Henderson Island under the above name, and, as he very correctly points out, it differs from *P. coralensis* Peale from the Paumotu group in having the feathers of the crown deep rose-pink (instead of purplish-pink), the same colour extending to the base of the bill: the chin and middle of the throat, as well as the vent, white; and the tail longer.

Since I published my notes on the Henderson Island Birds in the 'Bulletin' referred to above, Dr. Richmond has very kindly forwarded to me for examination four examples of the true *P. coralensis* Peale. They were collected by C. H. Townsend at Makatea, Niau, and Fakarava, all islands lying round Carlsoff Island in the Paumotu Group, where the type of *P. coralensis* was obtained. The only example of that species in the British Museum is the type of *Ptilopus chalcurus* Gray, an immature bird said to have come from Hervey Island, as is mentioned below.

To the differences between *P. insularis* and *P. coralensis* given by Mr. North, I may now add that the two males from Henderson Island are altogether larger and more heavily built than the birds from the Paumotu Islands. The bill is much stouter and deeper, measuring 5·5 mm. from the rhamphothæca to the angle of the mandible, as compared with 4·5 mm.; the wing longer, 145–147 mm. (144 mm. = 5·7 inches in the type specimen recorded by Mr. North), as compared with 134–136 mm., and the tail 110 mm., as compared with 87–89 mm. A female of *P. coralensis* forwarded by Dr. Richmond is somewhat smaller than the three males recorded above, and measures, wing 129 mm., tail 86·5 mm.

The type specimen of *P. chalcurus* G. R. Gray was founded on a younger example in first adult plumage with the first primary-quill less attenuated towards the extremity than in the fully adult. Younger birds of this group of Fruit-Pigeons may always be recognised by this character.

Count Salvadori (Cat. Birds B. M. xxi. p. 104) rightly regarded the type of *P. chalcurus* as synonymous with *P. coralensis* Peale, but described the type of the latter species sent him for examination by the Smithsonian Institution as a distinct species under the name *P. smithsonianus* (*l. c.* p. 105). Dr. C. W. Richmond, however, assures me that in hunting down the records of their types, he discovered that the bird sent to Count Salvadori as the type of *P. coralensis* and described by him as *P. smithsonianus*, was without doubt the type specimen of the former, and was obtained on Carlsoff Island, though that information was not shewn on the label when Count Salvadori examined it. *P. smithsonianus* is therefore a pure synonym of *P. coralensis*.

I have little doubt that the type of *P. chalcurus* was not obtained at the Hervey or Cook Islands, for, as Wiglesworth pointed out ('Ibis,' 1891, p. 574), Garrett spent six months in that group and did not obtain specimens.

In the type of *P. chalcurus* the colour on the forehead (now faded to purple-violet, the specimen having been mounted in 1855 and exhibited for many years) extends



right to the culmen, and though Count Salvadori says there are a few greenish feathers at the base of the bill, a careful examination fails to reveal anything of the sort, all being glossy violet, though somewhat faded. The true locality of the type of *P. chalcurus* must remain uncertain, but there can be no doubt that the birds from the Paumotu Islands are of the same species.

The figure of the type-specimen of *P. coralensis* drawn by Peale shows a bird with the crimson confined to the middle of the crown, the forehead as well as the superciliary region being grey. It is similar to an immature male from Niau forwarded by Dr. Richmond, and I think, as Cassin has already suggested, that the type must be an immature specimen. Against this it must be remembered that Count Salvadori, who has examined the type-specimen, believes that this surmise is not correct, "as the bird has the first primary much attenuated at the tip, more so even than in the type of *P. chalcurus*," which he takes to be the same as *P. coralensis* (cf. Cat. Birds B. M. xxi. p. 105, footnote). The synonymy of *P. coralensis* should therefore stand as follows:—

*Ptilonopus coralensis* Peale, Zoology U.S. Expl. Exped. p. 190, pl. 51 (1848); Cassin, U.S. Expl. Exped. 2nd ed. p. 272, pl. 32 (1858).

*Ptilonopus chalcurus* G. R. Gray, Cat. Birds Trop. Isl. p. 37 (1859) (Cook or Hervey Islands).

*Ptilopus coralensis* Salvad. Cat. Birds B. M. xxi. p. 104 (1893).

*Ptilopus smithsonianus* Salvad. t. c. p. 105 (Carlsoff I., Paumotu Group).

In addition to the above, the following species were also obtained at Henderson Island:—

<i>Sula piscator</i> Linn.	}	<i>Gygis candida</i> (Gmel.).
<i>Procelsterna cœrulea</i> (Bennett).		<i>Totanus incanus</i> (Gmel.).
<i>Anous leucocapillus</i> (Gould).		<i>Calidris arenaria</i> (Linn.).